(e) 72 persons have been arrested and prosecuted in the above 43 cases.

Communications facilities in rural areas

403. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Government's schemes for providing communication facilities in rural areas of the country;

(b) the number of villages in North-Eastern Region where wireless and local loop services have been provided and the number of villages in which the above said facilities have not been provided; and

(c) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The Government is providing communication facilities in rural areas through following means:-

(i) Postal communication facilities are provided in the rural areas in terms of delivery of Dak at the door step throughout the country, collection of mails from villages with population over 300 and sale of stamps and stationery to customer at their door step in the rural areas. Postal counter facilities are provided through a network of 1,55,837 post offices of which 89% are in the rural areas. The Department of Posts has also launched e-post facilities through out the country. Under its scheme e-mail message booked at any post office in the country are sent through internet medium to any postal address in the country by downloading, printing and sending out delivery through normal posting channels.

(ii) The Government has planned to provide telecom facility in each revenue village of the country through wireless, wireline and satellite media. Additionally, telecom facilities are being provided by BSNL through Grameen Sanchar Sewak (GSS) Scheme with the active cooperation from Department of Post. BSNL plans to cover 80,828 villages with telecom facility during 10th Five Year Plan Period. Telecom facilities are also being extended in rural areas through GSS scheme run by Non-Government Organisation in West Bengal.

(iii) Financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is being provided to meet the net cost for operation and

maintenance of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in the revenue villages identified as per census 1991, installation of VPTs in the additional revenue villages as per census 2001 and replacement of Multi Access Radio Relay (MARR) technology VPTs installed before 01.04.2002. Financial support from USO Fund is also being provided for upgradation of public telephones to public tele-information centres & installation of high speed public telecom information centres in Block Headquarters and villages with population exceeding 2000.

(b) 10,263 villages in North Eastern Region have been provided telecom facility on Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) system. 6,344 villages are yet to be provided with telecom facility on WLL system in North Eastern region.

(c) The permission to Commission WLL System in North Eastern Region was received only in the last week of August 2002, leading to delay in process of procurement of equipment and its installation.

Modernisation of telegraph services in NER

404. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any initiative for modernization of telegraph services in Assam and other NER States;

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise;

(c) whether any budgetary allocations have been made for this purpose during the current year; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) District-wise details of modernization of telegraph services in Assam and other NER State are given in the Statement-II (see below).

(c) No budgetary allocations have been made during the current year since project has been completed long back.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.